

The Leader Inside

by Don Blohowiak

"You will never be more effective as a leader than you are as a person."

That profound epiphany comes from Roger Gibson, an executive overseeing thousands of employees and billions in revenue for United Airlines in the mountain West of the U.S.

Those words capture the essence of a profound reality so often missed by organizations and individuals trying to harness the power of leadership.

Leadership is Very Personal

Leadership is not about "styles." It is not about deploying techniques to manipulate others into doing what you want. It is about becoming the kind of person that others willingly follow; and the kind of person who complements such trust with competent, responsible actions to effect desirable results.

It is said that dogs smell fear. Likewise, people smell sincerity.

And so, the work of the leader begins on the inside.

Aristotle wrote, "The hardest victory is victory over self."

A true leader requires growth and discipline of self. A true leader invites honest appraisal and responds to that feedback with willing adjustment. A true leader frequently examines him- or herself candidly and begins the hard work that honest self-examination inevitably requires.

A true leader turns attention inward on Self before looking outward to Others.

You cannot be a better leader than you are a person.

Leadership Action Steps

- Assess yourself -- against your own personal standards, as well as the expectations others have for you. Do you have data about how others see you? If not, ask for candid feedback. At a minimum, balance every performance review you give to another with an invitation for the other person to return the favor. Ask, "What can I do to help you perform better? What am I doing that gets in the way or impedes your progress?"
- Make an improvement plan. What are you doing with the insight you now have of your strengths and developmental challenges? If you have a picture in your mind of your ideal self, what is your plan to transform that vision into reality?

- Stay informed. Expand not only your technical and business knowledge but your understanding of leadership and the changing world in which you strive to lead. The following information resources may be helpful to you in this regard:

- www.SmartLeadership.com This web site offers many thought-provoking articles and free subscriptions to two free e-mail resources, "The SmartLeadership Mag-Ezine," and "The SmartLeaders Edge," a monthly e-mail indexing the best of today's leadership articles.
- "The Trend Alert" is a weekly thought-provoking e-mail essay on business and societal trends that affect managing and leading in today's world, produced by The Herman Group and the Workforce Stability Institute. To subscribe, send e-mail to: join-trendalert@herman.net An archive of past issues can be viewed at: <http://www.herman.net/archive.html>
- An archive of some past issues of The Leader's Letter are available at: <http://www.leadwell.com/db/1/36/0/10/?cat=11>

- Put personal growth and improvement on your agenda. Write it into your personal action plan; put it on your To-do task list. Make the job of making a better you a top priority.

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